

# REPRESENTATIVE JIM MCCUNE

## 2ND DISTRICT SESSION REPORT

### 2007 LEGISLATIVE SESSION



*Rep. Jim McCune speaking on the House floor on President's Day.*

#### REP. JIM MCCUNE

**Olympia Office:**

413 John L. O'Brien Bldg.  
PO. Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600  
(360) 786-7824

**Toll-Free Hotline:**

1-800-562-6000

**E-mail:**

[mccune.jim@leg.wa.gov](mailto:mccune.jim@leg.wa.gov)

**Web Site:**

[www.houserеспублиcans.wa.gov/McCune](http://www.houserеспублиcans.wa.gov/McCune)

### TOWN HALL MEETINGS SCHEDULE

**April 24** – Eatonville Library  
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

**April 26** – Yelm Rosemont Asst.  
Living Center - 215 Killion Rd. NW  
5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

**April 27** – Graham Fire and  
Rescue Station  
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

**April 28** – Orting Multi-Purpose Center  
202 Washington Ave.  
9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Dear Friends:

It is truly an honor to serve as one of your two state representatives in the 2nd Legislative District. I am so grateful for the hundreds of ideas and suggestions that have come to my office from all of you – ideas that are helping us to build a better state and to make the 2nd District an even better place to live, work and raise a family.

With this newsletter, I want to bring you up to date on where I think our priorities should be for the rest of this legislative session and in sessions to come. I welcome your additional input on these and other matters, and encourage you to contact my office on all matters of concern to you.

Like many of you, I was outraged by the early release of felons by the Department of Corrections, including violent offenders.

All of us in the 2nd District are aware of the pressing educational problems we face – not only in our communities, but throughout the state of Washington. If we do not get more serious about demanding higher standards, accountability and local control, our children and grandchildren will not be prepared to face the highly competitive world they will face as adults.

We need to address the unique and important requirements of our special-needs citizens, whose existence rely on our support; our senior citizens, who have passed the leadership torch to us; and our veterans, who gave some or gave all to keep this great country, America, FREE for our safekeeping. They deserve special attention.

Finally, we have to get a better handle on taxes and how we control government spending.

I'll discuss these issues in this newsletter. I hope that will stimulate more thought and more ideas from each and every one of you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature of Jim McCune in black ink. The signature is stylized, with the first letters of the first and last names being large and prominent.

Rep. Jim McCune

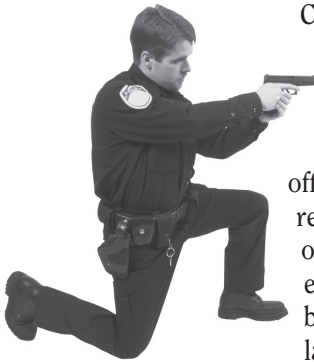


# REP. JIM McCUNE

## 2ND LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

### McCUNE WORKING TO MAKE OUR COMMUNITIES SAFER...

The number one job of an elected official is to protect our citizens, but Washington is not doing it well.



Chances are, you have seen stories in newspapers and on television concerning the early release of felons from state prisons. The official reasoning for the early releases is a shortage of prison beds. At least three law enforcement officers have been killed in our state since last August by offenders who,

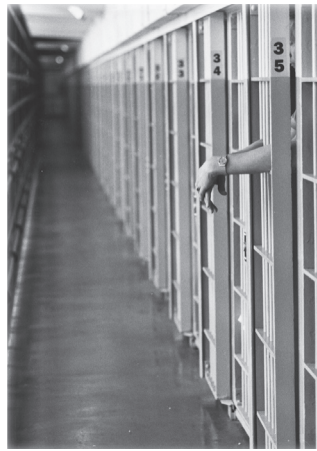
theoretically, were still under community supervision – in other words, on parole.

I was pleased to be a co-sponsor of HB 2084, which would have tightened supervision of all released felons in our community. Unfortunately, nothing came of that bill.

Instead, legislation concerning more early release programs and granting convicted felons the right to vote after they are released from all supervision, even if they have not made all legal financial restitution to the victims of their crimes, is working its way through the Legislature.

The Department of Corrections is attempting to fix the supervision problem administratively, but as legislators and citizens, we must be diligent in paying close attention to ensure DOC actually does what it says it is going to do.

I will be watching that closely and will appreciate your ideas. The current situation is intolerable.



### MAINTAINING OUR FOCUS ON METHAMPHETAMINES; GANGS

I also was the prime sponsor of two bills this session which would have counted certain methamphetamine convictions as a “strike” in the, “three strikes and you’re out” sentencing guidelines.

Our community continues to be plagued by this hideous and dangerous drug. While the Legislature has taken some steps in the past to address the issue, the problem continues to grow and requires more aggressive action and more punitive penalties.

Our growing problem with gangs in the 2nd District and surrounding areas also requires legislative and law enforcement attention. That is why I was happy to co-sponsor HB 2215 and HB 2224, giving law enforcement the tools it needs to combat gang-related activity more effectively and more clearly defining penalties for gang-related criminal activity.

Let’s face it, as long as our communities and neighborhoods live in fear of gang domination, attempts to rebuild families, promote economic revitalization, create new, family-wage jobs and improve the performance and learning atmosphere in our schools will be intensely difficult. It will take some time before this growing problem takes root with the people of Washington and their elected representatives, but those of us who sponsored the anti-gang legislation this session will continue to work at it.

The House also approved a bill tightening penalties related to auto theft, particularly laws related to juvenile auto thieves. I was a co-sponsor of that bill as well.



Are you having problems with gang activity or drug activity? Do you have information law enforcement needs to know? Pierce County has a “Gang Hotline” to report your concerns.

- Call 253-798-4800. Your identity will be kept ABSOLUTELY CONFIDENTIAL.

Thurston County *does not* have a dedicated gang hotline, but law enforcement officials there tell us they are considering installing one in the next few months.



# REP. JIM McCUNE

## 2ND LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

### MCCUNE SUPPORTS HIGHER EDUCATION STANDARDS; SAYS WASL IS FLAWED GRADUATION REQUIREMENT

Every year, there seems to be a new set of “hot” issues – ones that are particularly important to people at the time. One issue, however, is consistently at the top of people’s minds – the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL).

Unfortunately for most of us, particularly our 10th graders, the WASL brings many unpleasant thoughts to mind. Whether or not a student will be able to continue to college hangs on the outcome of this test alone. It doesn’t matter how well you have done academically in the past. Your future hangs on your ability to pass the WASL, not on your academic achievement.

That is why the Legislature is moving in the direction of requiring students to take, and pass, courses in algebra, geometry and biology as part of their high school graduation requirements. House Bill 2327 is a somewhat watered down version of a tougher bill that I co-sponsored (HB 1288).

We all want high standards in our education system, but the WASL’s standards are too far from the norm to be acceptable. They are too subjective. Let’s get back to real standardized achievement testing, and put the bar in its right place again. Graduation should be attainable to everyone, and students should be tested on what they are actually learning in school – not their ability to use unconventional methods and logic.

I will continue to work for local control and high standards, so all children can graduate from high school equipped with the best tools for success in life.



**REP. JIM McCUNE WITH U.S. ARMY SGT. NORM YOUNG. SGT. YOUNG IS STATIONED AT FORT LEWIS AND IS FROM GRAHAM.**

### WARM FUND FOR SENIORS

There still may be time for Pierce County seniors to get some help with home heating bills. South Sound Outreach Services (SSOS) received money that can provide seniors (age 55+) with \$200 grants for seniors’ source of heat – electrical, gas, oil or wood.

The source of the money is a private bequest, so there are some stipulations. Pierce County seniors can get the details by calling SSOS at 253-593-2111

### MCCUNE SPONSORS TAX RELIEF, EDUCATION BENEFITS FOR VETERANS AND SENIORS

Military veterans have served our nation and protected our freedoms with distinction, courage and heroism and continue to do so to this day. State law allows World War II and Korean War veterans to be awarded their high school diplomas if they entered military service before graduating from high school. I was proud this session to co-sponsor legislation granting the same rights to our Vietnam veterans. HB 1283 passed the House 96-0. I feel certain it will have similar support in the Senate.

I was the prime sponsor of three bills to provide tax relief for veterans, active military personnel and senior citizens this year:

- HB 1308 would create a real estate excise tax exemption for homes sold by active duty military members as a result of military relocation orders.
- HB 1596 would modify provisions relating to disposable income limits for property tax relief for senior citizens, persons retired because of physical disability and for veterans.
- HB 1720 would provide property tax relief for all veterans of the armed forces.

I also was a co-sponsor of three other important pieces of legislation benefiting veterans and seniors.

- HB 1107 provided property tax relief for senior citizens and persons retired by reason of physical disability.
- HB 1454 would change college tuition waivers for families of fallen veterans, including National Guard members.
- HB 2065 would prioritize tuition waivers for war veterans.



## MCCUNE SUPPORTS RELIEF FROM PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

The State of Washington has a new program that can reduce prescription drug costs for anyone in the state without drug insurance coverage.



Best information yet? It is free! No hidden fees. No application costs.

But it is not available everywhere...yet. About 400 of the 1,300 pharma-

cies in the state have signed on to the program including Safeway, QFC, Alb-ertson's and Fred Meyer. State officials hope to expand the program to as many as 1,000 pharmacy outlets in the near future.

Signing up is easy.

Call 1-800-913-4146. Or download the application from your computer by going to [www.rx.wa.gov](http://www.rx.wa.gov).

The plan will save those of you paying retail prices for prescriptions an average of about 20 percent for brand name drugs, and an average of 60 percent for generic drugs.

If prescription drug costs are a drag on your household budget, I recommend exploring this new option.

## MCCUNE PREFERS TAX RELIEF TO SPENDING INCREASES

There is still time before the final 2007-2009 budget is passed by the Legislature. A couple of things are clear, however.

- Spending the next two years will be about 18 percent higher than the past two years.
- That is twice the growth of the average family income.
- Which means the state could be in trouble.
- And a proposed "container tax" would have been costly. One farmer tells me that, if that new tax had been enacted, it would have cost his farm about \$200,000 per year – money that ultimately comes out of your pocket in the form of higher prices.

Washington doesn't have a revenue problem – yet. But it has a serious spending problem.

There are some things I support in the budget. Increased funding for education and smaller class sizes for our teachers is one of them. Paying our state employees what they are worth is another.

However, I am greatly concerned that the House proposal didn't include a constitutionally mandated "rainy day" fund to protect against a future economic downturn or a natural disaster.

Another thing. Why does the existing budget proposal plan the hiring of 3,800 additional state workers, but doesn't provide a single dime to close the existing pension gaps for PERS 1 and PERS 3 employees. In fact, the budget proposal eliminates "gain sharing" for those same employees. Protecting "gain sharing" is my highest priority.

Think about it – 3,800 new state workers. That's nearly twice the size of Eatonville! The budget creates a whole new "government city."



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**JIM MCCUNE**  
REPRESENTATIVE  
P.O. Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600